King Family 'Disappointed' by Outcome

Associated Press

ATLANTA, June 10—The son of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. says his family plans no further action to try to uncover a conspiracy in his father's 1968 assassination but rejects a Justice Department finding that there was no evidence of such a plot.

"We are disappointed, but this is certainly not something we did not expect," Martin Luther King III said Friday after the Justice Department released results of an 18-month investigation.

As in four earlier investigations, Justice investigators "found no reliable evidence that Dr. King was killed by conspirators who framed James Earl Ray," the 150-page report said. "We found nothing to disturb the 1969 judicial determination that James Earl Ray murdered Dr. King."

The civil rights leader's son recalled that the family had sought an independent investigation "because we do not believe that in such a politically sensitive matter the government is capable of investigating itself."

King told an Atlanta news conference that his family stands by a Memphis civil jury's ruling that Memphis bar owner Loyd Jowers and "others, including government agencies," conspired to assassinate his father.

But the new investigation found no credible evidence to support allegations in recent years from Jowers and former FBI agent Donald Wilson, and earlier from Ray himself, that a mysterious "Raoul"—later identified as "Raul"—or others, including federal agents, police or black ministers, participated in a plot to kill King and frame Ray.

The Justice Department recommended that no further investigation be conducted.

# of New Conspiracy Inquiry

In Smartt, Tenn., James Earl Ray's brother, Jerry, said, "The American public and the King family believe James was innocent, so it doesn't matter to me what the politicians say."

Although Ray pleaded guilty in 1969 to killing King, he claimed three days later—and until his death in prison in 1998—that he was framed, an account dismissed by the report.

Prodded by the King family's embrace of some conspiracy theories, Attorney General Janet Reno ordered the new probe Aug. 26, 1998, even though two Justice Department investigations, a House committee and the Shelby County, Tenn., district attorney's office previously studied the murder.

In December a Memphis civil court jury ruled for the King family in its wrongful death lawsuit against Jowers and concluded Jowers and "others, including government agencies," plotted to kill King. The new Justice Department probe also rejected those findings, citing contradictory retellings by Jowers, a lack of physical evidence and some contradictory evidence.

In 1993 Jowers said he received $100,000 to hire a hit man to kill King and said the gun came from Raoul.